

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 STATE 016150
ORIGIN SS-25

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DRAFTED BY NEA:ALATHERTON, JR./HLK

APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY

P - MR. HABIB

S/S:SESTEINER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS NIACT IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 016150

EXDIS FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE, IS, US

SUBJECT: MOVEMENT OF SYRIAN FORCES TOWARD SOUTH LEBANON

1. FOR BEIRUT: CHARGE SHOULD CONTACT PRESIDENT SARKIS
URGENTLY AND CONVEY THE FOLLOWING TO HIM ON SECRETARY'S
BEHALF.

A. ISRAELIS HAVE INFORMED US THEY HAVE EVIDENCE THAT
SYRIAN ARAB SECURITY FORCE UNITS ARE MOVING SOUTHWARD TO
THE VICINITY OF NABATIYAH. AT HIGHEST LEVEL, THE ISRAELIS
HAVE CONVEYED TO US THEIR GRAVE CONCERN OVER THIS DEVELOP-
MENT.

B. IN THE SPIRIT OF OUR CLOSE RELATIONS WITH LEBANON,
OUR SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT SARKIS AND OUR DESIRE TO HELP
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AVOID ANY DESTABILIZING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REGION, WE
ARE BRINGING THIS ISRAELI REACTION URGENTLY TO THE ATTENTION
OF PRESIDENT SARKIS.

C. WE ARE URGING THE ISRAELIS TO AVOID ANY PRECIPITATE
ACTION, BUT BELIEVE WE OWE IT TO OUR LEBANESE FRIENDS TO
MAKE CLEAR THE GRAVITY WITH WHICH THE ISRAELIS VIEW THIS

MATTER. BEFORE RESPONDING TO ISRAEL'S APPROACH TO US,

WE NEED TO KNOW ALL THAT PRESIDENT SARKIS CAN TELL US ABOUT THIS DEVELOPMENT. SPECIFICALLY, WE ARE PUZZLED AT THIS SUDDEN MOVE WITHOUT HAVING RECEIVED ANY ADVANCE INDICATION THAT IT WAS BEING CONSIDERED. WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY NEW DEVELOPMENT THAT REQUIRED A CHANGE IN THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH AS IT HAS EXISTED OVER RECENT WEEKS.

D. SUCH A MOVE AT THIS POINT, FOUR DAYS AFTER A NEW ADMINISTRATION HAS TAKEN OFFICE IN WASHINGTON AND ON THE EVE OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF SECRETARY VANCE'S MIDDLE EAST TRIP, CLEARLY PLACES USG IN A DIFFICULT POSITION. WE WANT TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ASSURE THAT CALM AND STABILITY ARE MAINTAINED IN LEBANON AND IN THE AREA DURING THE IMPORTANT PERIOD AHEAD, BUT WE WILL NEED THE COOPERATION AND CONFIDENCE OF ALL CONCERNED IN THIS ENDEAVOR. WE HAVE CONVEYED OUR VIEWS FRANKLY AND IN A SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP AND ARE CONFIDENT PRESIDENT SARKIS WILL RESPOND IN THIS SAME SPIRIT.

2. FOR DAMASCUS: AMBASSADOR SHOULD CONTACT SARG AT AN APPROPRIATELY HIGH LEVEL (PRESUMABLY KHADDAM OR SHIHABI) AND INFORM THEM OF THE CONTENT OF THE APPROACH WE ARE MAKING TO PRESIDENT SARKIS. YOU SHOULD SAY THAT WE ARE DOING THIS IN THE SPIRIT OF CANDOR AND FRIENDSHIP THAT CHARACTERIZES OUR RELATIONS. GIVEN THE IMPORTANT ROLE SYRIA HAS PLAYED IN STABILIZING THE LEBANESE SITUATION

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AND THE FACT THAT ARAB SECURITY FORCES CONSIST LARGELY OF SYRIAN UNITS, WE FELT WE OWED IT TO OUR SYRIAN FRIENDS TO INFORM THEM OF THIS APPROACH TO PRESIDENT SARKIS. WE WOULD WELCOME ANY COMMENTS WHICH SARG MAY WISH TO CONVEY TO US.
VANCE

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